MEGADETH
COUNTDOWN TO EXTINCTION
TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

War broke out in the streets of Los Angeles as Megadeth put the finishing touches on their fifth album, *Countdown to Extinction*—not that the group's fiery frontman Dave Mustaine or his bandmates had anything to do with it. It was April 1992, and the City of Angels was in upheaval over the acquittal of four white policemen who had savagely beaten an African-American construction worker named Rodney King. With the riots in full effect, the band had to wrap up recording by 6 PM each day to meet the city's curfew. Mustaine lived two blocks from the studio and, despite the danger, he would walk there and back. Meanwhile, bassist David Ellefson and drummer Nick Menza kept guns in the glove boxes of their cars. Change was in the air.

Tensions weren't limited to LA, though. It seemed like people were frustrated about all sorts of things all over. The Gulf War was still fresh in people's minds, the state of the environment was becoming headline news and one President George H.W. Bush was seeking reelection, despite having failed to deliver on previous campaign promises.

It all amounted to a perfect storm, inspiring Megadeth to create this, their best and most accessible album. The group had previously released LPs like *So Far, So Good…So What!* and *Rust in Peace*, which contained songs that tackled topics like censorship and religious bloodletting in the Middle East. But none were as polemical as those on *Countdown*. Megadeth laced the songs with acid-tongued commentary about subjects ranging from the futility of war ("Architecture of Aggression") to the senseless brutality of caged hunting (the title track). "Foreclosure of a Dream" even sampled Bush's infamous "Read my lips" speech to make a statement about how steep taxes led to a recession that endangered the American Dream.

And while many of Megadeth's peers in the thrash-metal scene were still blazing out speed-limit-challenging whirlwinds, Mustaine & Co. had made the conscious decision to focus on songwriting as much as technicality. Thanks to a perfect balance of hard-rock song structures, epic choruses, and fleet-fingered guitar work, *Countdown to Extinction* became an instant classic, benefiting from copious MTV and radio play. Before long, songs like "Symphony of Destruction," "Sweating Bullets," and "Skin O' My Teeth" had entered metal's canon.

Upon its release that July, the record shot to No. 2 on the Billboard chart, just behind Billy Ray Cyrus, and within two years, the RIAA had certified it double platinum. The secret to its success, though, was simply that the group was in top form. Mustaine was 31 and newly sober, and his clarity of mind was obvious in brilliant lyrics like "You know your worth when your enemies praise your architecture of aggression," not to mention his venomous rhythm guitar attack. The rest of his bandmates completed the picture, as lead guitarist Marty Friedman played memorable solos, Ellefson jammed out dizzying arrays of low-end thunder, and Menza attacked his kit like a Tasmanian devil. They sounded hungry—just listen to the live recordings from 1992 that come with this edition—and they were rewarded when the album earned a Grammy nomination and the title cut garnered a Genesis Award from the Humane Society of the United States for raising awareness of animal rights. Spin magazine even posited that it "may just be the finest thrash-metal album ever made."

The record was a true blockbuster in 1992, and 20 years after its release, many of the songs' topics still seem current. There has been another George Bush and another Gulf War, the real-estate crisis has come to a head since the group wrote "Foreclosure of a Dream," and endangered species are still a hot topic.

Megadeth remains current as well. With the exception of a short hiatus in the 2000s, the band has never ceased releasing albums built on biting social commentary and crushing riffs.

On *Countdown's* mega-hit "Sweating Bullets," Mustaine sang, "If the war inside my head won't take a day off, I'll be dead." That war may continue to rage, but the good news is Megadeth are showing no signs of stopping.

– by Kory Grow
July 2012

COUNTDOWN TO EXTINCTION

1 SKIN O' MY TEETH MUSTAINE

2 SYMPHONY OF DESTRUCTION MUSTAINE

3 ARCHITECTURE OF AGGRESSION MUSTAINE / ELLEFSON

4 FORECLOSURE OF A DREAM MUSTAINE / ELLEFSON

5 SWEATING BULLETS MUSTAINE

6 THIS WAS MY LIFE MUSTAINE

7 COUNTDOWN TO EXTINCTION MUSTAINE / MENZA / ELLEFSON / FRIEDMAN

8 HIGH SPEED DIRT MUSTAINE / ELLEFSON

9 PSYCHOTRON MUSTAINE

10 CAPTIVE HONOUR MUSTAINE / MENZA / ELLEFSON / FRIEDMAN

11 ASHES IN YOUR MOUTH MUSTAINE / MENZA / ELLEFSON / FRIEDMAN

ORIGINAL CREDITS

PRODUCED BY
MAX NORMAN / ON YER BIKE LTD. AND DAVE MUSTAINE

ENGINEERED AND MIXED BY
MAX NORMAN

ASSISTANT
FRED KELLY JR

ADDITIONAL ENGINEER
MICAJAH RYAN

RECORDED AT THE ENTERPRISE, BURBANK, CA
JANUARY 6 – APRIL 28, 1992

CREATIVE DIRECTION
TOMMY STEELE

ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN
HUGH SYME

PHOTOGRAPHY OF COVER ELEMENTS
CAMERON WONG

BAND PHOTOGRAPHY
CHRIS CUFFARO

LOGO RENDERING
JOHN TAYLOR DISMUKES

LINER NOTES BY
KORY GROW

LIVE AT THE COW PALACE
SAN FRANCISCO, 1992

1 Intro
2 Holy Wars . . . The Punishment Due Mustaine
3 Skin O' My Teeth Mustaine
4 Wake Up Dead Mustaine
5 Hangar 18 Mustaine
6 Countdown To Extinction Mustaine / Menza / Ellefson / Friedman
7 Foreclosure Of A Dream Mustaine / Ellefson
8 This Was My Life Mustaine
9 Lucretia Mustaine / Ellefson
10 Sweating Bullets Mustaine
11 In My Darkest Hour Mustaine / Ellefson
12 The Conjuring Mustaine
13 Tornado Of Souls Mustaine / Ellefson
14 Ashes In Your Mouth Mustaine / Menza / Ellefson / Friedman
15 Symphony Of Destruction Mustaine
16 Peace Sells Mustaine
17 Anarchy In The UK Matlock/Cook/Jones/Rotten

Produced by
Dave Mustaine

Mixed by
Johnny K

Recorded live at The Cow Palace, San Francisco, CA, 12/4/1992

Mastered by
Tom Baker at Precision Mastering, Hollywood, August 2012

Reissue Credits

Compilation Produced by
Michael Murphy and Christian Johnson

Art Direction
Tom Recchion

Design
John Lorenzi and Dave Mustaine

Photography
Mark Weiss, Ross Halfin, William Hames, Pete Cronin and Gene Kirkland

Project Assistance
Dave McRobb

Personal Management
Mark Adelman for Frontline Management Group

Product Management / Marketing
Stacey Freeman

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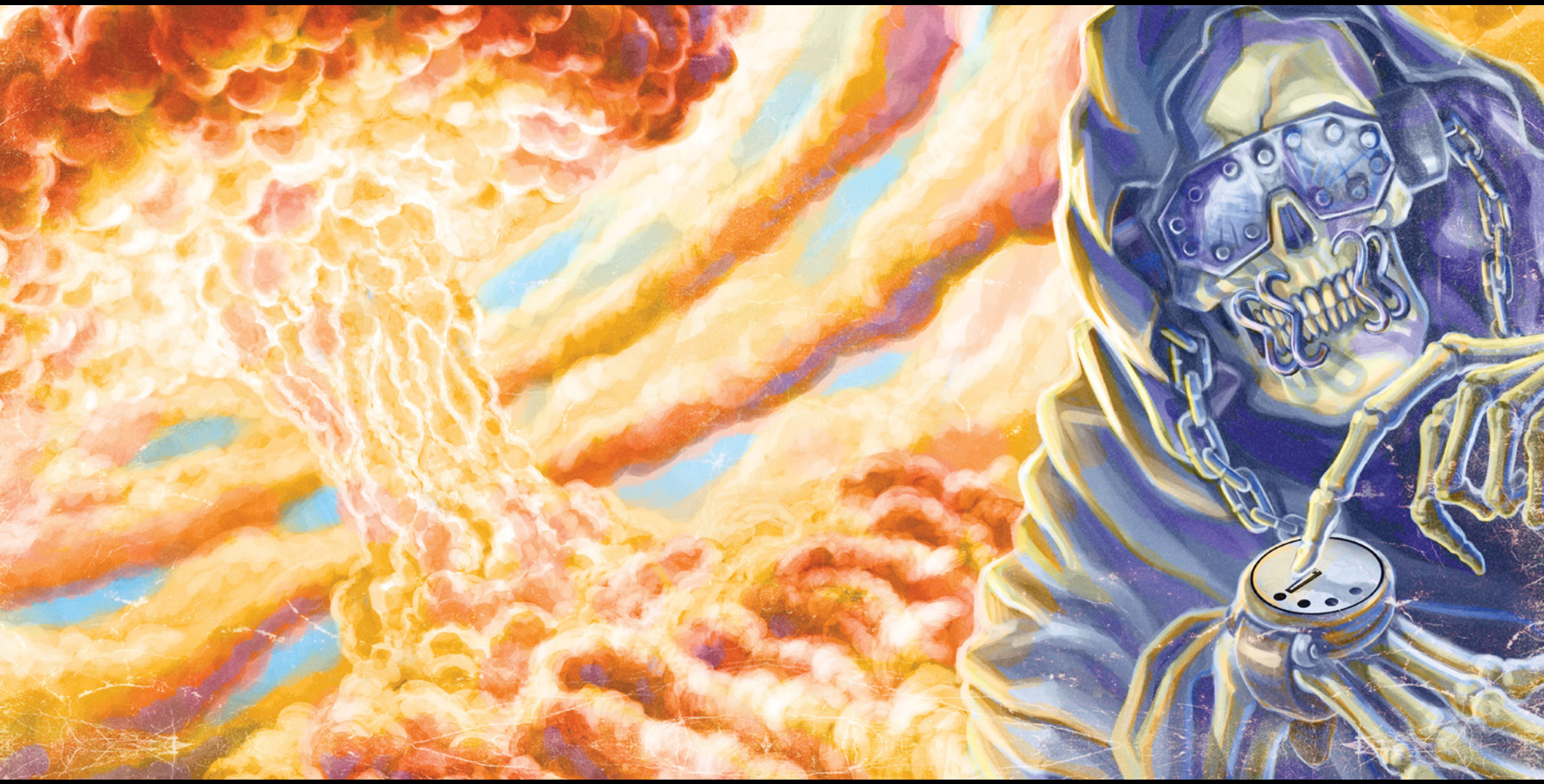
Dave Mustaine
Lead Vocals, Lead & Rhythm Guitars
David Ellefson
Bass Guitar, Backing Vocals
Marty Friedman
Lead, Rhythm, Acoustic Guitars &
Backing Vocals
Nick Menza
Drums & Backing Vocals